

Text: Romans 3:21-28

Theme: I'm Always Right!

Date: June 18, 2017 (Pentecost 2A)

In the Name of Christ Jesus, who has declared us right with God, Dear Christian Friends,

Can you recall a time when you had to deal with someone who gave you the impression by their words and actions that they thought that they were always right. If you know such a person, do they think that they have all the answers to every question that has ever been asked. Whether the topic had to do with politics or medicine, world history or economics, this person had no problem letting you know that their position was not just an opinion, but it was the only right way of looking at the topic. Without a doubt, they were always right, at least they thought they were. Such a person, obviously, is not a humble person, but a bragger, a boaster; someone who thinks that they are superior to the other people.

While having such a prideful disposition about one's earthly life can often times be very distasteful to those around you, imagine how the Lord is disgusted with those that have such a braggadocio opinion about their spiritual life before the holy God of heaven and earth. When it comes to how we get to heaven, there is absolutely no room for bragging. That is exactly the point of Paul's question in the words of our text for today, **WHERE THEN IS BOASTING? IT IS EXCLUDED.** In other words, for a child of God, spiritual bragging is simply out of place and any spiritual boasts are simply not true. There is no way any of us here today can look at any one else who is here today and say, "I'm better than you," or "I deserve to go to heaven more than you," or "I can see why God would let me go to heaven, but I don't understand what he would see in you."

Yet, there is a way that each and every one of us can say of our own spiritual life, "I'm always right" – and say it in a way that is very God-pleasing. In fact, the only way to be able to get to heaven when we die is to be able to say while we're alive, "I'm always right." In the words of our text for today God wants us to know how and why we can and must always say, "**I'm always right!**" May God's Spirit remind us again that we are right before God only because 1) we are justified by grace and because 2) we are atoned for by a sacrifice.

1. Justified By Grace

One reason that each of us can say to God and one another, "I'm always right," is because each of us can say to God and one another, "I'm justified by grace." In the words of our text Paul writes: **THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE, FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD, AND ARE JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT CAME BY CHRIST JESUS.**

With these words God makes two points: 1) God wants us to know and believe that we will live forever in heaven, 2) God wants us to know and believe that we have no reason to brag about that. God says, **THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE, FOR ALL HAVE SINNED.** It makes no difference whether we think we are less or more of a sinner than the person sitting next to us, or the person we work with, or the neighbor across the back yard. In God's eyes, all he sees is sinful people, 100% sinful. No person in this world has measured up to God's glory, God's holiness. When Paul says that we all have fallen short of God's approval for entry into heaven, he is using a word that would have made his readers think of a race. Imagine, if you will, a finish line to a foot race miles and miles away. And the more we try to run to that finish line, the more we realize that we are just not going to make it. We have to give up because we cannot take one more step to the finish line, we are exhausted from trying. We have fallen short. That's the way it is in our spiritual life. God says that to make it to the finish line, we must be perfect; not just good some of the time, but perfect all of the time in thought, word and deed. You see, God doesn't take good people to heaven, nor does he take people to heaven who really try hard. No God only takes perfect people to heaven. But that's not you and that's not me. God makes it very clear, **THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD.**

But here's the next question. Who are the people in this verse that God says have been justified by God's grace? It's the same people who have fallen short of getting to heaven on their own. Imagine again, the finish line that we could never reach. When it comes to God's grace we get the benefit of Jesus coming out of the grave on Easter Sunday and running to the race track of our lives. There he personally picks us up and carries us across the finish line. Then he says to his heavenly Father "*Here they are, dear Father. He made it across. She made it across. They made it across, because I made it across, and I want them to get the glory for it.*"

The reason you and I no longer fall short of God's approval is because we have been JUSTIFIED BY GRACE. With that word "justify" the apostle Paul has now taken his hearers away from the race track and into the court room. "Justify" is the word for which we today would say "acquit" or "declare not guilty". So, we're justified because Christ died. We're declared not guilty of sin, even though we are guilty of sin, because Jesus became guilty of sin in our place. And that's why God reminds us that we have been **JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE.** Jesus did it all for all people. No sin is left to be paid for. No believer is left out of heaven. We are declared right with God.

JUSTIFIED BY GRACE, that's the phrase Paul uses to give comfort to the Christians in Rome. When Paul uses the word **GRACE** he wants to impress upon his hearers a love that is not deserved. Grace means undeserved love, a love that is not earned nor merited. Is there anyone who would be so bold and braggadocios to stand before God and tell him that he or she deserves to be justified by

God? That he or she deserves to be declared not guilty of sin? God forbid that that would ever be the attitude of any of us, but God also forbid that any one of us would ever think that we are not justified in God's sight. God says we can be sure we are going to go to heaven, because he has promised that we will go to heaven for the sake of Jesus. Each of us can say every moment of every day, "I'm always right," "I'm always right in God's sight because of Jesus." I'm justified by grace.

2. I'm atoned for by a sacrifice.

Each of us can also say, "I'm always right," because I'm atoned for by a sacrifice. That's the second wonderful thought in these words from St. Paul. This thought does the very same thing as the first main thought. It makes us certain of God's love, and it humbles us to think that people like us have received that love. In the words of our text Paul speaks of God's love for sinners this way, **GOD PRESENTED HIM AS A SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT, THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD.**

To atone for something means to pay a price to make up for something, to make someone at peace with someone they have wronged. The payment necessary to make atonement for sin, to make peace between sinners and the holy God, is blood but not just any blood. No, the Bible says, *"The blood of Jesus, God's Son, purifies us from every sin" (1 Jn. 1:7).* The only way to be declared right in the eyes of God is through faith in the blood of Jesus who made the payment for every sin. God not only offered his holy Son for this sacrifice but he accepted its value on behalf of every sinner. God accepted as the payment price of Jesus' holy blood as the payment price necessary to make us right with God, always. The blood of Jesus declares us right with God. Always!

Because of Jesus, each one of us can say, "I'm always right. I'm always right, because I'm atoned for by a sacrifice." That is exactly the point of the Apostle Paul's words in our text: **WHERE, THEN, IS BOASTING? IT IS EXCLUDED. ON WHAT PRINCIPLE? ON THAT OF OBSERVING THE LAW? NO, BUT ON THAT OF FAITH. FOR WE MAINTAIN THAT A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH APART FROM OBSERVING THE LAW.** How can anybody pompously, arrogantly, braggadociously, boastfully think that God owes him a home in heaven, when he examines his life on earth? But, God be praised and thanked, how can anyone not be certain that God will give us a home in heaven, after we leave this life on earth! We have the word and promise of God that we are justified by faith apart from observing the law. God doesn't count our sins against us, because Jesus atoned for them by a sacrifice, and as a result of that atoning sacrifice, we truly are justified by grace.

Now, some might say that this teaching leads to indiscriminate sinning. *"If you know all your sins are forgiven, why, then you'll do whatever you want to do."* But is that what faith does? Does saving faith look for a license to sin? Not at all! Saving faith trusts, believes and follows – all to the glory of the God who first loved us. When it comes to believers and what they do and more importantly why they do it, God's Word gives us a clear understanding, *"We love, because he first loved us".*

Do we live every day with the attitude "I'm always right?" Certainly we can understand that to be sinful, but it doesn't have to be. When we live with the attitude of heart that knows and believes that we are always right in God's sight through the blood of Jesus, it make a difference in how we think and act; at home, work and play. How we carry out our roles as children and spouses, how and why God gives fathers into Christian families, how and why we participate in a congregation's ministry to education children and adults, to reach out to those who do not yet have a place to learn of Jesus' love for sinners.

Knowing that we are always right in the eyes of God is not a license to sin, but it is the power of God to live to his glory. We love, because he first loved us. Because we are right with God we can know without any question at all that when we die, we will live in heaven. And we can say every single day of our lives until we get there, not with even a hint of bragging, but quite often with spiritual tears of joy and amazement in our eyes, "I'm always right." Through Jesus Christ I'm always right. That is my confidence – and yes, that is my boast—as a child of God. Amen.